

piece of rural Tennessee into a beautiful place to live, work, and raise a family.

Congratulations are in order to the members of the Houston County Historical Society and, most importantly, to the citizens of Houston County. I ask my colleagues to join with me in wishing them another 150 years of progress and prosperity.●

REMEMBERING HELEN EUGENIA HAGAN

● Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, today I rise to recognize Ms. Helen Eugenia Hagan, a remarkable pianist and pioneer for BIPOC women in music.

Her passion for performing began at a young age, and Ms. Hagan became the organist for the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church when she was around 11 years old. Ms. Hagan's talents earned her a spot at the Yale School of Music. In 1912, she was the first African-American woman to graduate from Yale University.

At the request of General John J. Pershing, Ms. Hagan traveled to France during World War I as part of a group led by preacher Henry H. Proctor. Ms. Hagan was the only Black performing artist sent to France during the war. Continuing to break barriers, she was also the first Black pianist to perform a recital at a New York concert venue. Ms. Hagan's compositions and concert work received outstanding praise. The then-Dean of the Yale School of Music credited Ms. Hagan with "rare promise," and critics commended her creativity and originality.

Struggling to find work during the Great Depression, she took graduate-level courses at Columbia University's Teachers College while still giving performances. In 1933, Ms. Hagan took a teaching position at Bishop College in Texas and gave private music lessons in New York. She remained committed to musical composition, performance, and education until her passing in 1964.

On February 6, 2021, the New Haven Symphony Orchestra will honor Ms. Hagan with a History Award. Alongside Yale University, the symphony has been dedicated to sharing the life story of this incredible woman, who performed her "Piano Concerto in C minor" with them in 1916. This award is a tribute to Ms. Hagan's extraordinary legacy, which will be enduring.

I applaud her many accomplishments and hope my colleagues will join me in remembering Ms. Helen Eugenia Hagan.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 4:17 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 335. An act to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of per-

sons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 5:58 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HOYER) has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 335. An act to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of persons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-19. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the status of Foreign Terrorist Organizations designation of Lashkar/ISIL (OSS-2021-0015); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-20. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the status of Foreign Terrorist Organizations designation of Harakat (OSS-2021-0010); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-21. A communication from the Senior Bureau Official, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the status of Foreign Terrorist Organizations designation of Ansarallah (OSS-2021-0011); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. INHOFE, from the Committee on Armed Services, without amendment:

S. 12. A bill to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of persons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. INHOFE from the Committee on Armed Services.

*Lloyd James Austin, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Defense.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have a request for one committee to meet during today's session of the Senate. It

has the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committee is authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 21, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a closed hearing.

NOMINATION OF ANTONY BLINKEN

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I come to the floor today to urge the swift confirmation for Tony Blinken to be the Secretary of State.

Like we saw with Avril Haines yesterday and moving toward Lloyd Austin today, we need to hold a floor vote on Mr. Blinken's nomination urgently.

Mr. Blinken is well known to the Senate, having previously been confirmed as Deputy Secretary of State, having served as the Deputy National Security Advisor and, of course, as the staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee before that.

He is superbly qualified to be the Secretary of State, and his knowledge and thoughtfulness were on display during 5 hours of testimony earlier this week. And since then, he has been asked to respond to hundreds of questions. As a matter of fact, he has had an inordinate number of questions that have been put to him for the record. He had nearly over half a hundred before his hearing. He has had from a couple of our colleagues nearly 600 questions, including multiple parts to those questions. And to my knowledge, he has largely answered them all, notwithstanding the size, the magnitude of it.

Now, I have been, since I arrived in this institution, one of the big advocates of the prerogatives of each and every individual Senator and of the institution. So I take a back step to no one, but there is a difference between prerogatives and prerogatives that are abused, which, in essence, are for the purpose of not seeking information but for the purpose of delaying a nomination.

Now, I appreciate that Senator RISCH, the present chairman of the committee, has been working with me to try to accelerate Mr. Blinken's nomination to the floor, but I would ask my colleagues, particularly those on the committee, to join him and I in an effort to bring one of the important national security positions in our government to the floor for a vote.

I don't think we should be leaving this weekend without a vote for the Secretary of State.

He is the right person to repair and restore our alliances, to rebuild and renew the State Department, to reinvigorate the relationship between the Department and Congress—something

that I think Republicans and Democrats alike have agreed have soured dramatically.

His testimony, his opening statement, his answers to questions show that he will be a working partner with this institution.

But, obviously, confirming Mr. Blinken is not just about the nominee himself. It is about doing what the American people expect and the Constitution requires—providing advice and consent to ensure that national security officials are in office in a timely manner.

We are facing challenges in every corner of the world. The world is on fire—from Iran to Russia, to Venezuela, to global challenges that define our times and defy borders, like COVID, migration, and climate change. We can't afford delaying to put Mr. Blinken in office. We can't allow the State Department to be rudderless.

If we don't have leadership, we can't be sure that China or Russia and others won't fill the vacuum as they have for the last several years or do something that is adverse to our national and economic security.

Imagine that there is a hostage deal to be had, as I believe there is, and you can't have another country call the Secretary of State because the Secretary of State doesn't exist.

Imagine if there are tensions between two countries that affect our national interests. You don't have a Secretary of State to call as counterpart in those countries to seek to ease the tension, to remove the threat.

Imagine if President Biden needs to have a Secretary of State engage in some part of the world to stop a conflict, to open an opportunity, to prevent an unintended consequence. We don't have that person, and we cannot expect the President to pick up the phone in each and every instance in the world as he is trying to deal with COVID at home and an economic crisis that follows on from that. That is what the Secretary of State does.

So Mr. Blinken also, finally, is not just critical to addressing challenges abroad, we have to acknowledge what the role of Secretary of State is here at home.

If we remember what just happened back on the 6th, three of the first four officials in the line of succession—the Vice President, the Speaker of the House, and the President pro tempore of the Senate—were in the Capitol when domestic terrorists breached the building. Every day we learn more details about this heinous attack, including that the terrorists, some of whom were chanting “Hang Mike Pence!” came within a minute or so of a potential face-to-face encounter with Vice President Pence. Thank God, through the quick thinking and heroics of our Capitol Police and other law enforcement, those three remained unscathed, but if something had happened, it is the Secretary of State who is fourth in line of succession to the President of

the United States. Leaving the office vacant is irresponsible. It is irresponsible in that regard. It is irresponsible in terms of something happening in the world and not having a Secretary of State who could work to deal with it so that we could preserve our national security, promote our national interests, and stop something, an unintended consequence, from happening.

Mr. Blinken has the qualifications. The challenges facing our country call for him to be confirmed, and I hope the Senate does not leave here tomorrow until he is confirmed.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The senior Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I would ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for such time as I may consume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, let me just say to my good friend from New Jersey how wholeheartedly I agree with him. I have known Tony Blinken for a long period of time. I have worked with him in different venues. I talked to him today at some length, and we talked together on many issues that I think are significant.

One issue out there is the one we have been talking about in the Western Sahara. He understands the issues. So I join my friend from New Jersey in encouraging a fast and quick confirmation.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO TEAM INHOFE

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, we recently said goodbye to a lot of really good, hard-working men and women from the previous administration, and I want to highlight a few of them.

We refer to them—some of my friends and some of my enemies refer to them as the “Inhofe mafia.” It comes from the committees that I have chaired, both the Armed Services Committee as well as the Environment and Public Works Committee. But anyway, they are really a great bunch of people.

I am going to start with Andrew Wheeler. Andrew Wheeler was with me for a number of years—14 years—before he became the Director of the EPA. Here is a guy who was nominated to be the Administrator. At that time, I said that there is no one in America who is as qualified as Andrew Wheeler for this job. The first job he had out of law school was with the EPA. When he was nominated to be Administrator, I kind of gave his whole life history.

All of my Senate colleagues know Andy and have known him for a long period of time—Democrats and Republicans. He has worked for me in the Senate as well as becoming one of my “has-beens,” as we refer to people who used to be with me and are still my good friends.

Andy started in my personal office as chief counsel and went on to serve as

the staff director and chief counsel during my time as chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee. He has decades of experience and is one of the most skilled energy and environmental policy experts I have ever come in contact with, and I am immensely proud of what he has been able to accomplish throughout his career, but particularly as EPA Administrator.

Andy understood that the EPA's mission is to implement the laws that are passed by Congress for the American people. The EPA's job is not to legislate. A lot of people think that. That is our job, to legislate, and then he carries it out, and he did really just a great job with that.

Contrary to what many on the left say Republicans want, we do want clean air and clean water and clean land, and Andy proved that he could accomplish that without burdensome overregulation. During his time at the EPA, he spearheaded a number of the rules and deregulatory actions that brought important relief to American job creators while protecting our environment.

He rolled back the economy standards on cars that were created to try to force Americans to drive vehicles they don't want to drive and that they can't afford. In its replacement, Andy developed the SAFE vehicles rule, which expands consumer choice and lowers the price of vehicles.

Andy also repealed and replaced the waters of the United States rule, or WOTUS. On the WOTUS rule, if you talk to any of the agricultural groups—I am talking about the Farm Bureau and other agricultural groups—they would say that was the rule we really had to do something about. States like mine don't need Washington bureaucrats imposing their radical regulations like WOTUS on people who know the waters better than they do. It is not an overstatement when I say that this was probably the greatest regulatory burden facing Oklahoma's farmers, landowners, and ranchers during the Obama administration. I was proud to see WOTUS repealed by the navigable waters protection rule, which provided a clean and lawful definition of waters of the United States and doesn't try to overregulate the arid parts of the State.

Oklahoma is an arid State. If you go out to the western part of Oklahoma, the panhandle of Oklahoma, it is really arid. If you take that regulation out of the hands of the States and give it to the Federal Government, there is always a concern by our farmers and ranchers in Oklahoma and across the Nation that they would turn these arid areas into wetlands.

Another of the regulatory overhauls accomplished by Andy was for the affordable clean energy or the ACE rule that replaced the illegal Clean Power Plan, which regulated emissions of coal-fired powerplants. I had long been critical of the Clean Power Plan and led the charge against it in the Senate.